

Pocahontas

Ch. 4, b. question 2 - Small Businesses
5, 3-b, question 2 - Millers.

John Johnson, whose home was at Marlins Bottom, headstern corn had matured in Nicholas. He started on foot to Nicholas, but lost his way in the Black Mountains. He was lost for nine days, but finally made his way to a house. There he was given food gradually until he could take a full meal. He made the trip to Nicholas, brought back the seed corn which planted one of the first crops grown in Pocahontas.

By the early part of the century corn could be ripened in the county, and since the people preferred corn meal to hominy meal, many grist and saw mills were built.

Some of the best known of these mills were: The two mills at Millpoint, built by the Cackleys. The lower mill being built by Valentine Cackley, who also promoted other industries such as a tannery, a timber mill and a store. This was around 1830. The upper mill was built by Joseph Cackley in 1834 but was later sold to Sampson Matthews.

The Poage Mill on Knapps Creek. This mill was built in the late part of the 18th century by James Poage. When he emigrated to Kentucky, he sold it to Peter Lightner. Lightner improved it and for years maintained a wide circle of customers. The Henry Harper mill succeeded this mill. The burrs used by this mill are on Cummings Creek, having been taken there by Price McComb. They are believed to be among the oldest in the county. These millstones were made by Adam Sharatt near Fries on the Greenbrier River. Sharatt also had a mill on Greenbrier River.

Dilley's mill, eight miles from Huntersville on Thorpe Road was built by Henry Dilley one of the four Dilley brothers who were among Pocahontas County's earliest pioneers. This mill was kept in the possession of the Dilleys throughout its years of service to the public, and is from one which it stands is still in their possession.

The Michael Daugherty mill on Mill Run near Sunset. This is believed to be the first tub mill, propelled by water anywhere in this whole region. It was patronized by all sections of upper Pocahontas and had the reputation of being one of the best of its kind. Sometimes these tub mills were put on runs that had only sufficient water during the rainy season. For such mills a long hollow log was often used for trunking to carry the water to the wheel. These mills did not grind so much but their product was the sweetest and best obtainable. Michael Daugherty was one of the first of the nobility to settle on Knapps Creek. He was not only able to pay his own passage to America, but to hire the services of those who sold themselves as indentured servants for a certain period of time.

Swago Mill operated by Jonathan McNeill. He was the eldest son of Thomas McNeill who came to Swago around 1769 and appears to have been an interprising person. Milling, weaving, fulling cloth and powder making was carried on under his supervision. Coverlets woven by one Jones were still in use fifty years or more after they were woven. This mill is now held by Judge George McClintic, though of course its no longer in use.

There were many other grist mills. David James one of the first men to live on Droop Mountain had a mill. James Wanless a local minister operated two grist mills. Henry Clark had a mill on Spring Creek, but I haven't been able to get any authentic information about them. In fact, in every community of the county there were mills at one time or another. Mills have been placed on almost every stream of water large enough to turn a small wheel if only during the rainy season.

The burrs or stones for many of these mills were made from sandstone found in this county in such great quantity and of unusual hardness. Calvin Price has a pair of these mill stones made more than a century ago by John Hannah of Elk, for the mill that was on the Varner place on the Big Spring Fork of Elk R. They were given to Mr. Price by the late Samuel Varner when he sold his farm. They are about 30 inches in diameter, and weigh over 100 lbs. each. Mr. Price believes they are made of this Droop sandstone found here in the county.

However, as soon as it was possible, the home made millstones were replaced with imported stones. French burrs appear to have been the desired ones in the more permanent mills that did custom grinding. The early settler was a resourceful man and if he could not get the imported ones he made them from material at hand.

About the Varner Mill, the story goes that John Hannah built the outfit complete in one day except the "jigging thing". That appears to have been the bark or board attached to the bottom, stationary stone, down which spouted the meal. These mills served well their day and an occasional one can be found still standing, though not in use. (Some of these mills were repaired and used by the moonshiners during the days of prohibition.)

Aside from these grist mills there were also powder mills located on many of the mill runs of the county. The original name of Mill Run on Lanty McNeel's place between Hillsboro and Beard, was Powder Mill Run. The site of the power mill was just above where the county road crosses. The powder maker was a man by the name of Hannah. He had a peculiar and effective line of sales talk. He would remark that he made powder and had plenty of it, and would sell it, but that many of the hunters did not like his product, in fact he did not particularly care to use it himself. This of

reply would be that it was too quick. A quick powder of course was the one most desired for the old type of mountain rifle.

Thomas McNeill, the Swago pioneer, maintained considerable of a powder plant on Swago Creek, near the residence of Squire Rogers. He boiled his salt petre from the rich soil to be found in the limestone caves of this region, particularly the cave on the McClintic lands not far from the residence of Lee Overholt. The proper amounts of sulphur, nitrogen, charcoal and what not were compounded together and the paste had to be mixed like the lady beats a cake. Thomas McNeill had a mill to do this stirring and beating by water power, and to grind the mass into powder after it was dry. One day he had a big stirring of powder on a grinding and went home to dinner. Something went wrong: somehow a spark was generated, and the whole thing, mill and all, blew up.

Information: History of Pocahontas County - Price
and from old copies of the Pocahontas Times dated
August 13, 1931.

The first business of any kind established at Marlins Bottom (Marlinton) was a combined saw mill and carding mill built by James A. Price before the Civil War. It was located on the slough along the road leading to Campbelltown, just opposite the home of A. C. Pifer. It was run from water from Stony Creek. An effort to augment this power by water from Greenbrier River from an intake just below the mouth of Stony Creek failed, and the plant itself was washed away in the flood of 1877. This mill was in charge of a man by the name of James E. A. Gibbs, who was a man of the tenant class and who barely made a living for himself and a large family.

From the Pocahontas Times - 1923.

A few families, such as John R. Flemmons on Red Lick Mountain made hundreds of pounds of maple sugar every year. It was stirred until it pulverized and became as light as brown sugar. Much of it was taken to

Lewisburg and exchanged for kettles and household goods. Almost every family made enough sugar for their own use. After Mr. Flemmens death, Mrs. Flemmens and her daughter, Elizabeth, lived at Buckeye and earned a living by spinning and weaving.

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The pioneers of Pocahontas County went through with many hardships not only in clearing the land, into fertile fields, blazing trails, fighting the Indians and establishing and maintaining homes it fell on the shoulders of the housewife to furnish the necessary clothing and bedding for the entire family which was generally made of wool which was shorn often times by the wife washed, carded and spun by her into various kinds of clothing which was used by her family the socks and other clothing were made of wool spun on the old Spinning Wheel which was generally used in the winter months. From this wool socks, sweaters, blankets and other clothing and bedding was made almost entirely by hand and it was about this time that the loom came into use by the pioneers of Pocahontas County way back in the first part of the eighteenth century.

During the eighteenth century and in the first part of the nineteenth Pocahontas County had many looms and many weavers as most of the women followed were taught to spin and weave at an early age.

Among some of the weavers brought to the attention of the writer was Nancy Patton of Millpoint who wove on a loom in the middle of the eighteenth century she being a fancy weaver making mostly tablecloths and Counterpane some of which are held by the Wallaces at Millpoint. Her daughter Elizabeth Ruckman the wife of Wallace Ruckman was also a weaver and a spinner

When finished it was put into a suit of clothes for her husband. She also wove for other people namely bedspreads and counterpanes and carpet her loom was bought from the late Mrs. Isaac McKeel of Millpoint in 1897 and she wove on it until 1918 just before her death.

~~William H Gabbert~~ William H Gabbert was born in Greenbrier County 1840 the son of Steven it ~~was~~ Gabbert he being a frale young man his mother taught him to weave on the loom, when he was about 30 years of age they moved to Millpoint and located over the millrace in what was known as the loom house here he wove Coverlets, counterpanes, table linen, girthen carpet, jeans and lincy some of which his daughter Mary Turner is the proud owner some of the wool used by him was carded on the old Wellington T Hogsett carding machine at the lower mill at Millpoint, he later moved to Huntersville where he practiced his profession selling his ware to friends and neighbors locally, in his declining years he moved in with his daughter Mary Turner at Marvin Chapel above Millpoint where he continued to weave and did so up until his death in 1920. His work is in the hands of many people of Pocahontas County as he often went from house to house where-ever they had a loom his last loom was bought from Lura Naugh of near Mary and now in the hands of Mrs. Turner.

Another weaver of mention was Lydia Beverage wife of Washington Beverage of near Backeye on Dry Creek, her first loom was used before her by

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Beverage made her a loom with which she wove for many people as she wove coverlets, blankets, carpet, and linen towels, she wove until about 1920 .

Hannah Cloonan wife of Timothy Caddonan was born 1813 was the daughter of George Kee who came from Ireland, she was taught to weave at an early age as she wove all the bed clothing, their dresses and in fact wove all the cloth that went to make their clothing, she wove for other people carpet 10cts a yard, lincy 10cts and flannel 15 cts a yard

Jonathan McNeill was a weaver and dyer he wove at what is the entrance to McClintic farms today, he made his own dyes as did the rest of the old weavers.

Very few people living today are able to weave but one exception is Georgie Loudermilk of near Buckeye who learned to weave when a young girl but has not wove for several years but she remembers most of the drafts as they were called the following are some of them and the one who copied and wove by them Virginia Fancy. by Mrs. Newton Duffield,

The Rising Sun by Jane McNeill, The Double Rose Jane Adkison 1846. The Zinfleur. Petersburg Beauty by Mrs J A Moore. 1921. ^MAlbermarl Beauty by Jane McNeill 1846. The Golden Wheels & Diamonds. The Leaf & Square by Nancy Rose 1897. Four Wheels. The Blazing Star. Royal Beauty. by Georgie Loudermilk. The Pine Knot. Young Lane Fancy. Mountain Life by Maude Loudermilk (now Mrs

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(ts) 1914). The Ginny Hen by Nancy Roakes. The Bow Knot. The Globe. The Seat Woven by Jane McNeill. The True Lovers Knot came to this county in 1884 from Lost Creek W. Va. All of these patterns were wove by our pioneer weavers and today these drafts are cherished by Mrs A. W McNeill of Buckeye as her mother Lydia Severage wove from these same drafts years ago as well as the ones that made the patterns and whose names are attached.

The following were weavers Georgie Loudermilk, Jane Adkison, Katie Hannah, Susan Rogers, Elizabeth McNeill, Mary McNeill, Jane Kinnison, Catherine Armstrong, Francis Cundiff, Mildred Kee, Elizabeth Buckley, and Malissa Fleming all of the Swago Community. Nancy Syms, Angeline Gaylor and Catherine Underwood of Beaver Creek. and many others .

Carey Daws of Marlinton who has very poor eyesight learned the weaving trade while at school this was about 1911 he wove carpet, rugs and chair seats much of his ware is found in and near Marlinton but due to his eyesight he stopped operating temporarily. Price Kessler of Greenbank who lost his eyesight several years ago made brooms at his shop just above Greenbank these brooms found a ready sale and were sold throughout the county and other parts of the state.

Just after the revolutionary war the late Frederick Phillips who was a wheel right installed a lathe made looms, spinning wheels, spools, spool frames

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and chairs,his loome and spinning wheels found ready sale all over
Pocahontas County and especially the Greenbank community.

The loom and Spinning wheel era played a very important part in the
development of Pocahontas County,as this was their sole way of getting cloth-
ing and bedding as there was very few stores and money was very scarce there-
fore it fell upon the shoulders of the mothers and daughters to supply these
essential articles for the entire family .Some of these articles are cheriah-
ed very dearly by the people of this county ,not only are they keepsakes of
high value but you can see the quality of the product made in the many homes
by hand by the wives of our forefathers that blazed the way that we today mig-
ht have a more abundant **IXI** life.

We might have looms in operation today but factory weaving is much
faster,production larger as it would be almost impossible to supply the cloth-
ing needs of today by the wheel and the loom,nevertheless we have here in Poca-
hontas County today some few people using the spinning wheel and occasionally
a loom in operation,but the latter used in making carpet more than anything
Information-----Mrs Mary Turner & Maggie Ruckman Millpoint.W.Va.
Mrs.A.W McNeill& Georgie Loudermilk Buckeye.W.Va.
C.E Pricet & Carcy Davis Marlinton.W.Va.
R.W Browns History of Greenbank District.(a part)